

## DISSONANCE, SELF-PERCEPTION, AND HONESTY IN CHILDREN<sup>1</sup>

MARK R. LEPPER<sup>2</sup>

*Stanford University*

A self-perception analysis was presented of Freedman and Fraser's "foot in the door" effect—increased compliance with a substantial demand produced by prior compliance with an earlier, less consequential request. From this perspective, conceptually analogous effects were predicted in a variety of radically different situations, and this possibility was examined in a paradigm involving young children's compliance to adult wishes in the face of temptation not to comply. In a first experimental session, two groups of children were forbidden from playing with an attractive toy under either mild, but sufficient (high dissonance), or severe (low dissonance) threat of punishment, while a third, control, group received no initial prohibition. Three weeks later, a second experimenter asked these subjects to play a game in which they could obtain attractive prizes only by falsifying their scores. As predicted from self-perception analysis, subjects who complied with the initial prohibition under mild threat showed more resistance to temptation in this second situation than control subjects or subjects who had initially complied under severe threat, and severe threat subjects tended to show less resistance to temptation than control subjects. An attempt to assess changes in children's self-perceptions directly provided only partial further support for the proposed analysis.

Several years ago, Freedman and Fraser (1966) published an intriguing demonstration of a phenomenon they called the "foot in the door" effect—the proposition that a person's compliance with an initial small and perhaps trivial request might increase the probability of his subsequent compliance with a larger and more substantial demand. In this study, two undergraduate experimenters contacted suburban housewives in their homes, first with a small request and later with a larger, more consequential request. The initial re-

quest, moreover, varied in both the sort of action requested and the issue involved. The housewives were first asked either to place a small sign in their window or to sign a petition on the issue of either safe driving or keeping California beautiful, and virtually all subjects, in each case, complied. Two weeks after their first contact, a second experimenter returned to each home to make a larger request, asking all subjects to place a large, unattractive billboard promoting auto safety on their front lawns for several weeks. All subjects who had been contacted originally were seen this second time, and the performance of those subjects receiving each of these four initial requests was compared to that of a control group not contacted prior to the final request.

Remarkably, this study succeeded in demonstrating a foot-in-the-door effect of fascinating and unexpected generality. Each of the four prior request conditions produced significantly greater compliance with the large final request than the control condition which had not been previously contacted, and the differences among the four request conditions were minimal. Even the simple action of signing an innocuous petition, passed by a

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<sup>2</sup> Requests for reprints should be sent to Mark R. Lepper, Department of Psychology, Stanford University, Stanford, California 94305.

first experimenter, to "Keep California Beautiful" increased the subsequent probability of the subject's agreeing to place a large billboard reading "Drive Safely" on her lawn, when asked to do so by a second, unrelated experimenter.

To explain this unexpected generality of their foot-in-the-door effect, Freedman and Fraser (1966) offered the following speculation:

What may occur is a change in the person's feelings about getting involved or about taking action. Once he has agreed to a request, his attitude may change. He may become, in his own eyes, the kind of person who does this sort of thing, who agrees to requests made by strangers, who takes action on things he believes in, who cooperates with good causes [p. 201].

In essence, they suggested, the generality of the effect of initial compliance might have stemmed from a two-stage process in which, as a result of performing an initial action, (a) the person's perception of his own dispositions and attitudes toward such actions is changed and (b) the likelihood that the person will perform other similar and even more consequential actions when subsequently given an opportunity is increased by these changes in his self-perceptions.

Despite its intuitive plausibility, Freedman and Fraser's account of their data has remained largely speculative and has received little further research attention. Recent theoretical analyses of the self-perception process (Bem, 1965, 1967; Kelley, 1967), however, suggest a broader theoretical context for Freedman and Fraser's hypothesis by implying precisely that people's perceptions of their own attitudes and dispositions will frequently be affected by observation of their own overt actions.

Essentially, this self-perception analysis proposed by Bem and by Kelley rests on two assertions that present self-perception processes as a special case of more general person-perception processes. The first assertion is that people will ascribe attitudes, traits, and dispositions to others from an observation of the others' overt behavior and its controlling circumstances. To the extent that external pressures are perceived as great, one will attribute another's actions to his environment; while to the extent that external pres-

ures toward action appear weak, one will attribute another's actions to characteristics of that other. The second assertion is that a person may also come to "know" his own attitudes and dispositions, in part, through an identical process of drawing inferences about his own attitudes and dispositions—the sort of person he must be to have behaved as he did—from the actions he observes himself taking and the conditions under which they occurred.

With this self-perception theory, it is possible to account for a variety of phenomena, including the large dissonance literature on "insufficient justification" (cf. Aronson, 1966). In these studies, subjects are induced to engage in some unpleasant or inconsistent behavior under conditions of either high and clearly adequate or low and psychologically "insufficient" external justification for the behavior; the typical dissonance result is that subjects given low extrinsic justification for the behavior they have been induced to undertake come to believe that these actions were intrinsically justified. In a self-perception analysis, this outcome is the result of a simple inference process: In the low justification conditions, the subject infers from the lack of external pressure that he must have wished to behave as he did; while in the high justification conditions, he infers that he was forced to behave as he did by the external pressures in the situation.

Similarly, one can construct a self-perception account of the Freedman and Fraser (1966) study—the person observes himself taking action on a good, if innocuous, cause without any obvious external pressure and infers that he must be the kind of person who becomes involved with such causes—and, viewing this experiment from a self-perception perspective, he has two theoretical consequences. First, this account stresses the importance of the amount of external pressure used to induce initial compliance, proposing that changes in self-perceptions and a resultant increase in subsequent compliance should occur only when initial pressure is minimal, as in the Freedman and Fraser study. In fact, the self-perception account additionally suggests the possibility of an "overjustification" effect (Lepper, Greene, & Nisbett, in

press; Nisbett & Valins, 1971). That is, if external justifications were perceived as clearly "oversufficient," the subject might infer that he is the sort of person who behaves as he did only when there is a great deal of external pressure, and he might be actually less likely to comply subsequently in situations involving lower extrinsic justification. Equally important, a self-perception analysis suggests that foot-in-the-door effects may occur in a wide variety of situations, including the various insufficient justification paradigms.

Consider, for example, the classic "forbidden toy" paradigm of Aronson and Carlsmith (1963). Children are asked not to play with an attractive toy under either mild or severe threat of punishment for transgression. Following a period in which all children resist temptation, children under mild threat have been shown repeatedly to devalue the prohibited activity—on both verbal derogation (Aronson & Carlsmith, 1963; Carlsmith, Ebbesen, Lepper, Zanna, Joncas, & Abelson, 1969; Lepper, Zanna, & Abelson, 1970; Ostfeld & Katz, 1969; Turner & Wright, 1965) and behavioral avoidance (Freedman, 1965; Pepitone, McCauley, & Hammond, 1967) measures, up to 6 weeks after the initial session.

The implication of the above analysis for this situation is that compliance with an initial prohibition under mild threat may produce changes in a child's self-perceptions that would lead to increased compliance with later adult demands in other, different resistance to temptation situations. That is, one plausible inference that a child might draw from his behavior of not playing with the forbidden toy, under low justification conditions, would be that he is a particularly "good" boy—at least one who complies with adult prohibitions and is able to resist temptation in such situations. On the other hand, if the external justification for the child's initial resistance to temptation were high, as under severe threat, an increase in subsequent resistance would not be expected; and, instead, an opposite, "overjustification," effect might be obtained, leading to decreased resistance to temptation.

The major purpose of the present study, then, was to examine this hypothesis by in-

ducing children in a first session not to play with an attractive toy, under either mild or severe threat, or by exposing them to a control procedure with no prohibition and then placing them subsequently in a different resistance to temptation situation. As in the Freedman and Fraser study, the initial request in the forbidden toy setting was designed to produce compliance by all subjects, while the second resistance to temptation situation involved attractive rewards for non-compliance and was designed to produce overt compliance by only some of the subjects. The major prediction of this study was that children complying with the initial prohibition under mild threat would show greater subsequent resistance to temptation than children complying under severe threat or than control subjects, and that control subjects would show at least as much, and possibly more, subsequent resistance to temptation than severe threat subjects.

In addition, the present study had two secondary purposes. First, it attempted to provide evidence for the postulated mediation of any resistance to temptation effects by changes in the child's self-perceptions. To this end, half of the subjects in each condition were given a self-description task designed to measure self-perceptions following the initial forbidden toy situation, as well as measures of the subjects' attitudes about transgression. For the remaining subjects, these measures were not included, to allow an assessment of the possible reactivity of these intervening measures with later resistance to temptation. Second, the study also attempted to test the "hydraulic" assumption implicit in many discussions of dissonance and self-perception processes—the assumption that when a person may plausibly justify or account for his behavior in a number of ways, his acceptance of any single explanation or resolution will tend to reduce his acceptance of other, possibly alternative resolutions. In effect, the various alternative justifications available in most insufficient justification situations are often viewed as being somewhat mutually exclusive (Brehm & Cohen, 1962; Lepper, Zanna, & Abelson, 1970; Steiner, 1968). To test this proposition, half of the subjects in each condition were told, prior to the initial

temptation period, that their peers had also found the to-be-forbidden toy highly attractive. Presumably, this manipulation should serve to prevent the usual derogation of the forbidden toy, which should be reproduced under standard mild threat conditions. If the hydraulic model were correct, one would predict both greater subsequent resistance to temptation in the mild threat conditions when this "attitude stabilizing" information was provided and a negative correlation between derogation of the prohibited toy and later resistance to temptation.

## METHOD

### Overview

Second-grade children served as subjects in two experimental sessions, several weeks apart. In the first session, the child indicated his relative preferences for six attractive toys. Following this ranking in the attitude stabilization conditions, the experimenter informed the child that most of his peers had agreed with his ratings of the toys, while in the standard conditions, no such remark was made. Orthogonal to this manipulation, two groups of children were induced not to play with their second-favorite toy during a short temptation period under either mild (high dissonance) or severe (low dissonance) threat of punishment for transgression. In a third, control, group, no prohibition was made, and the child was allowed to play with all of the toys.

At the end of this temptation period, a second "blind" experimenter asked the child to rerank the six toys, providing the traditional dissonance measure of derogation of the forbidden toy. In addition, half of the children in each condition were given a self-description task to assess changes in the child's self-perceptions postulated to mediate any behavioral effects on the measure of resistance to temptation. The remaining children in each condition were asked instead to play with a set of multicolored plastic tiles for an equivalent amount of time.

Three weeks later, the child was brought to a different room by a third, also "blind," experimenter to assess the child's resistance to temptation in a different situation designed to elicit overt transgression from some of the children. In this session, the child played a simple bowling game in which he could win a small prize only by falsifying his score. The score that the child reported earning in the experimenter's absence served as the measure of resistance to temptation in this new situation.

### Subjects and Experimenters

The subjects were 129 second-grade children, with a mean age of 7½ years. The subjects were obtained from two predominantly middle-class schools and were randomly assigned to conditions. The sample

included 66 males and 63 females, distributed about equally across conditions. Twelve subjects in each of the six cells received the intervening process measures, while an additional 9 or 10 subjects per cell did not receive these measures. Data from an additional 6 subjects, distributed across conditions, were discarded due to equipment failure in Session 2. Inclusion of their data in Session 1, however, does not alter the significance of the results obtained.

The study involved three experimenters. A male graduate student served as Experimenter 1 throughout, delivering the manipulations; and two female research assistants served as Experimenter 2 and Experimenter 3, collecting the dependent measures. Throughout the study, both Experimenter 2 and Experimenter 3 remained blind to the conditions of the subjects and unaware of the experimental hypothesis.

### Session 1

Experimenter 1 brought each child individually to the experimental room and demonstrated to the subject six attractive toys—a battery-operated airplane, a Tonka bulldozer, a gyroscope, an Etch-A-Sketch, a mechanical dog, and a small battery-powered robot. The toys were placed on a table, and the subject was asked to rank them by a method of elimination. The subject was first asked to indicate his favorite toy of the six, then his favorite of the remaining five, and so forth, until he had indicated his relative preferences for all six toys (cf. Turner & Wright, 1965).

*Attitude stabilization manipulation.* When the subject had completed the ranking procedure in the attitude stabilization conditions, Experimenter 1 mentioned casually, "Gee, you know, most of the other boys [or girls] liked the toys just the way you did. They liked the *first-ranked toy* best of all. Then they liked the *second-ranked toy* next best, and then the rest of the toys." This manipulation was restricted to same-sex peers to maintain its plausibility in the face of clearly differential attractiveness of some of the toys to the male and female subjects. For subjects in the standard conditions, this comment was omitted.

*Dissonance manipulation.* At this point, Experimenter 1 "remembered" aloud that he had some important work to do and would have to leave the subject alone for a few minutes. As Experimenter 1 rose to leave, in the mild (or the severe) threat conditions, he picked up the subject's second-favorite toy and told the subject,

Now while I'm gone, you can play with all of the toys except the *second-ranked toy*. It would be wrong to play with the *second-ranked toy*, and if you play with it, I would be a little bit annoyed (or very upset and very angry) with you.

Experimenter 1 then placed the forbidden toy at the far end of the table, reiterating "Now remember, I don't want you to play with the *second-ranked toy*, and if you play with it, I would be a little bit annoyed (or very upset and very annoyed) with

you, so I'm going to leave it down here." In the two threat conditions, when the prohibited toy was placed on the table, it was aligned with two fine lines out of the subject's sight. This procedure, validated by covert observations in previous studies (Carlsmith et al., 1969), allowed Experimenter 1 to determine whether the subject had played with the toy in his absence. No child in either threat condition actually transgressed.

In the control condition, no prohibition was given. The subject was told instead that he could play with all the toys.

*Intervening process measures.* At the end of the temptation period, Experimenter 1 returned, replaced all the toys in the center of the table, and signaled to Experimenter 2. Experimenter 2 entered the room and was introduced by Experimenter 1, who then departed, leaving Experimenter 2 alone with the subject. Experimenter 2 asked the subject to rank the toys again, using the same procedure as before. Derogation scores thus ranged from 1 (enhancement of the toy) to 6 (maximal derogation of the toy).

For the subjects who were to receive further intervening measures, Experimenter 2 next presented the self-perception measure. Five placards, labeled from "Very much like me" to "Not at all like me," were placed in order facing the subject and were read aloud to him. The subject was then presented with 12 adjectives—4 chosen to fall on a dimension of honesty-dishonesty and an additional 8 chosen to fall on a more general positive-negative continuum—printed on individual 3 × 5 inch cards. Each adjective was read to the subject, who was then asked to place the card in the most appropriate category. Each item was scored on a 5-point scale from 1 (dishonest/negative) to 5 (honest/positive), and the 4 "honesty" items and the 8 general "self-concept" items were each summed to yield two self-perception scores for each subject. At the completion of this procedure, Experimenter 2 removed these materials and showed the subject an ordered series of five male face sketches, which ranged in expression from a broad smile to a slight frown. To measure liking for Experimenter 1, the subject was asked to point to the face that was most like the man who had shown him the toys. Finally, to assess the subject's attitudes toward moral offenses, Experimenter 2 presented the subject with two brief stories of children yielding to temptation. After each story, the subject was shown a visual scale of five ordered squares (cf. Walster, Berscheid, & Barclay, 1967), was instructed in its use, and was asked to indicate (a) how bad he thought the protagonist was to act as he did and (b) how bad he thought the protagonist felt about what he had done.

For the other subjects, these intervening process measures were not administered, since it was felt that these measures might be reactive with the subsequent resistance to temptation measure. In these conditions, the subject was simply asked to make a design with a set of multicolored plastic tiles and

was allowed to work at this task for a period of time equivalent to that required by the other subjects to complete the intervening process measures.

In all cases, when Experimenter 2 was finished, she signaled Experimenter 1, who returned and accompanied the child back to his classroom, thereby terminating the first session.

## Session 2

Approximately 3 weeks after the initial session (mean interval = 19.2 days, median interval = 18 days), each subject was brought individually by Experimenter 3 to a second experimental room to play a bowling game. This game consisted of a 3-foot, felt-covered alley down which a steel ball bearing could be rolled. At the end of the alley was a vertical scoreboard containing three colored lights numbered 1-3. When the ball was thrown down the alley, a microswitch activated one of the lights in a preprogrammed sequence.

The subject was informed that these lights indicated how good each shot was and that the number next to each light represented the number of "points" that each shot was worth. The subject was given a board containing holes into which marbles could be fit and a box of marbles, and Experimenter 3 demonstrated to the subject how the marble board could be used to keep score. The subject was given several practice shots to be certain that he understood the rules of the game and how to keep score. The subject was then shown a tray of small prizes (e.g., a small flashlight, an Old Maid game, a magnifying glass, a tiny doll, etc.) that he could win if he did especially well on the bowling game. Experimenter 3 indicated that if the subject were able to fill a section of the board containing 35 spaces, he would win one of the prizes, and that if he did even better than that, he might possibly win additional prizes.

So that the subject could concentrate on the bowling game, Experimenter 3 suggested that she would go into the next room. The subject was instructed to play the game until it turned itself off and to keep his score on the marble board, so that Experimenter 3 could tell if he won any prizes. Experimenter 3 then left the room, telling the subject to come and get her when he was finished with the game.

The game was constructed to give each child a total score of 33 points—2 points short of the score presumably necessary to win a prize. Hence, the score that the subject claimed provided a measure of his resistance to temptation in this second situation, and when the subject fetched Experimenter 3 from the next room, she recorded the score he claimed to have earned. In fact, each child was awarded a prize, and at the completion of the study, the chosen prizes were distributed to all subjects. The subject was asked not to tell his classmates about the session, and he was returned to his classroom by Experimenter 3.

TABLE 1  
MEAN FINAL RANKINGS OF THE FORBIDDEN TOY

Stabilization condition	Threat condition		
	Mild	Control	Severe
Standard (no stabilization)	3.27 <sub>a</sub>	2.29 <sub>b</sub>	2.09 <sub>b</sub>
<i>n</i>	22	21	22
Attitude stabilization	2.41 <sub>b</sub>	2.38 <sub>b</sub>	2.00 <sub>b</sub>
<i>n</i>	22	21	21

Note.—Higher means indicate greater derogation. Cells not sharing common subscripts differ at the .01 level by Newman-Keuls procedure.

### RESULTS

Preliminary analyses revealed (a) no significant effects of sex of subjects or interaction of sex with experimental conditions and (b) no significant effects on the final resistance to temptation data of whether or not the subjects had received the additional intervening measures at the end of the first session. For subsequent analyses, therefore, the data were collapsed across these two dimensions.

#### *Derogation of the Forbidden Toy*

The mean rerankings of the toy which had been initially ranked second, and which had been forbidden in the two threat conditions, are presented in Table 1, where the predicted pattern of results—derogation occurring only in the mild threat—standard condition—is evident. Since this pattern may best be described by individual comparisons among the groups, a Newman-Keuls procedure for multiple comparisons (Winer, 1962) was employed to test the significance of the results. This analysis indicated that the mild threat—standard group did produce significantly ( $p < .01$ )<sup>3</sup> more derogation of the forbidden toy than all of the remaining conditions, which did not differ significantly from each other.

These results suggest that the necessary conditions for an appropriate test of the predictions concerning later resistance to temptation were met. Conditions of "insufficient" justification seem to have been created under mild threat, producing the traditional dissonance effect in the standard condition, but this derogation of the forbidden toy under

<sup>3</sup> All  $p$  values reported in this study are based on two-tailed tests of significance.

TABLE 2  
MEAN RESISTANCE TO TEMPTATION SCORES

Stabilization condition	Threat condition		
	Mild	Control	Severe
Standard (no stabilization)	34.82	36.48	38.86
<i>n</i>	22	21	22
Attitude stabilization	33.36	35.81	37.52
<i>n</i>	22	21	21

Note.—Lower means indicate greater resistance to temptation.

mild threat was effectively inhibited by the attitude stabilization manipulation.

#### *Resistance to Temptation*

The mean resistance to temptation scores—the number of "points" that the subjects claimed to have earned on the bowling game approximately 3 weeks after the initial session—are presented in Table 2. For this measure, a score of 33 represented an objectively accurate claim, and a score of 35 represented the minimal score necessary to win a prize.<sup>4</sup> These data were subjected to a  $3 \times 2$  unweighted-means analysis of variance, which appears in Table 3. In this analysis, as hypothesized, threat level had a highly significant effect on later resistance to temptation ( $F = 6.00$ ,  $df = 2/123$ ,  $p < .005$ ), while neither the attitude stabilization manipulation nor the interaction of this manipulation with threat level had significant effects on later behavior.

Clearly, this significant effect of threat level on resistance to temptation some weeks later, in a different setting and with a different experimenter, is consistent with the major prediction of this study. Subjects in the mild threat conditions showed significantly greater resistance to temptation than did subjects in

<sup>4</sup> Although the bowling game was designed to yield an objective score of 33 for each subject, a few subjects claimed scores below 33. These errors seemed typically to result either from simple scoring errors by the subject or from "mistreatment" of the experimental apparatus by the subject, which could cause the subject to lose a trial. Since these errors were distributed across conditions and were not instrumental to the subject, the data were analyzed as reported by the subject. Replacing these scores with scores of 33, however, does not change the pattern or the significance of the findings reported above.

TABLE 3  
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE ON RESISTANCE  
TO TEMPTATION SCORES

Source	df	MS	F
Threat level (A)	2	180.86	6.00*
Stabilization (B)	1	42.91	1.42
A × B	2	1.94	<1
Within-cell error	123	30.12	

\*  $p < .005$ .

either the severe threat ( $t = 3.35$ ,  $df = 85$ ,  $p < .01$ ) or the control ( $t = 1.99$ ,  $df = 84$ ,  $p < .05$ ) conditions, while the subjects in the severe threat conditions tended to show less resistance to temptation than the control subjects ( $t = 1.66$ ,  $df = 83$ ,  $p < .10$ ). In short, the subjects who complied with the first experimenter's initial request not to play with one of a number of attractive toys under conditions of "insufficient" justification subsequently showed increased compliance with the rules set by a second experimenter for the bowling game, while the subjects who complied with the initial request under conditions of "oversufficient" justification tended to show decreased compliance with this later implicit request.

However, while the data provide support for the major hypothesis of the study, they produced no evidence for a "hydraulic" model, in which derogation of the toy and subsequent resistance to temptation would be viewed as mutually exclusive responses in this situation. The prevention of derogation of the forbidden toy under mild threat in the attitude stabilization condition did not produce the increased resistance to temptation that a hydraulic account would predict; nor was there any significant correlation between derogation and resistance, either within the mild threat-standard cell or across all conditions.

#### *Intervening Process Measures*

Given these effects of threat level on resistance to temptation—increased resistance following mild threat and a tendency toward decreased resistance following severe threat—it is possible to examine the intervening process measures obtained from half of the subjects for evidence concerning the mediation of these behavioral effects.

TABLE 4  
MEAN SELF-ASCRIBED HONESTY SCORES

Stabilization condition	Threat condition		
	Mild	Control	Severe
Standard (no stabilization)	16.50	15.33	14.92
Attitude stabilization	17.50	15.92	16.33

Note.— $n = 12$  subjects per cell. Higher means indicate greater self-ascribed honesty.

Table 4 presents the mean self-perception scores for the subjects along the "honesty-dishonesty" dimension, where a score of 20 represents maximal self-ascribed honesty. Clearly, these data bear only a partial resemblance to the resistance to temptation data; and, in fact, a  $3 \times 2$  analysis of variance on these data yielded no significant effects for either manipulation or their interaction. An examination of the more specific, predicted comparison of the mild threat condition with the control and the severe threat conditions, however, did yield weak support for the hypothesized mediational role of self-perceptions related to honesty. Specifically, this comparison indicated a tendency toward higher self-ascribed honesty scores in the mild threat conditions than in the severe threat and control conditions combined ( $t = 1.80$ ,  $df = 70$ ,  $p < .10$ )—a pattern consistent with the significantly increased resistance to temptation obtained under mild threat. It should be noted, however, (a) that these data were obtained from only 72 of the subjects in this study and (b) that these results were severely attenuated by the data from a single aberrant subject in the mild threat condition, whose score fell 3.7 standard deviations below the mean of the remaining 23 scores in this condition. Were this subject's data deleted from the analysis, the mild threat condition would differ significantly from both the severe threat ( $t = 2.39$ ,  $df = 46$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and the control ( $t = 2.11$ ,  $df = 46$ ,  $p < .05$ ) conditions.

In addition to the self-ascribed honesty measure, this study also included several measures designed to assess possible alternative mediating processes that might have accounted for the obtained resistance to temptation effects—self-perceptions along a more

general "positivity" dimension, attitudes toward transgression, perceptions of the consequences of transgression, and liking for the first experimenter. Analyses of variance performed on each of these four auxiliary measures yielded no significant effects, and none of these measures showed a significant correlation with later resistance to temptation. Hence, these additional data, while not conclusive, provide no evidence for the mediation of the obtained resistance to temptation effects by any of these variables.

### DISCUSSION

The major results of this study, then, provide a clear conceptual analogue to Freedman and Fraser's (1966) foot-in-the-door effect in a radically different paradigm involving young children's compliance with adult prohibitions in the face of temptations not to comply. Theoretically, it was argued, the effects in both these studies could be seen as the result of a process of self-perception in which the subject observes his initial actions in the face of minimal external pressures and infers that he must be the kind of person who typically engages in such actions. Such a change in self-perceptions was hypothesized to mediate the increased subsequent compliance with larger future requests. Thus, in the Freedman and Fraser paradigm, the housewife infers that she is an "activist," in the sense of one who takes action on noncontroversial sorts of issues when requested; and in the present study, the child infers that he is a "good boy," at least in the sense of one who abides by adult rules in unfamiliar situations.

While these presumed changes in self-perceptions seem to show an unexpected generality in their effects on subsequent compliance in new situations, however, it also seems likely that these changes are, in another sense, relatively specific. In both studies, it seems probable that the two compliance situations were psychologically related, although temporally separated and involving different experimenters. Indeed, one might expect that the second setting in these studies immediately recalled the earlier situation for the subject, turning his attention to his previous behavior and suggesting the relevance of his initial actions for his behavior in this second

situation. Certainly there is ample literature documenting the general stability of a person's global self-concept or self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967; Wylie, 1961) to suggest that the brief experiences of the sort involved in these studies would be unlikely to alter dramatically the subject's general self-concept. More specific self-perceptions, on the other hand, with behavioral implications for only a limited set of psychologically related situations might well be substantially more liable to change and experimental manipulation.

In an attempt to assess the changes in self-perceptions presumed to mediate the resistance to temptation effects directly, this study included a measure of the subjects' self-descriptions along an honesty-dishonesty dimension, which provided only weak support for the hypothesis. That these results were weaker than the resistance to temptation data that they were presumed to mediate may simply be a function of the lesser reliability of the self-perception measure, the social-desirability constraints inherent in this measure, and the fact that only half of the subjects received these measures.

At the same time it may be worth noting that a number of previous self-perception studies have obtained results conceptually analogous to the present data—namely, behavioral effects consistent with a self-perception hypothesis with little evidence of postulated changes in self-perceptions. Thus, Valins and Ray (1967) produced decreased avoidance of snakes among snakephobics without changes in reported fear of snakes; Davison and Valins (1969) produced increased shock tolerance without changes in reported painfulness of the shocks; and Storms and Nisbett (1970) produced reports of earlier sleep onset among insomniacs without any differences in subjective reports of suffering.

Taken together, these data suggest the possibility of a more fundamental source of discrepancy between the verbal self-perception and behavioral resistance to temptation measures obtained in this study. Perhaps, as Nisbett and Valins (1971) have suggested, changes in self-perceptions will remain tentative for a subject until he has been provided an opportunity to validate these changes be-



haviorally. Alternatively, the implications of one's previous actions may become fully apparent only when one is subsequently placed in a similar situation that requires further related action. In any case, these results indicate a need for further study of the mediational role of self-perceptions in producing behavioral effects.

Regarding the common hydraulic assumption—that alternative modes of explanation or justification should tend to be negatively correlated—the results of this study were unequivocally negative. Although the derogation data indicated that the conditions presumably necessary for a test of this assumption were met, the mild-standard and mild-stabilization conditions did not differ in subsequent resistance to temptation. Nor was there any correlation of the two measures either across conditions or within the mild-standard condition. Since the hydraulic prediction was relatively straightforward, these negative data are slightly puzzling. Presumably, if the child in this situation is motivated to seek an explanation of his behavior, the child under mild threat could infer that he complied with the prohibition either because he happened to be the sort of person who consistently acts that way or because he happened to dislike the toy that was forbidden anyway. Thus, if the child were to decide, for example, that his behavior was simply the result of his clear dislike of the forbidden toy, there would be no reason for him to draw any additional inferences about the sort of person he is, and vice versa. Clearly, such was not the case. Possibly the attitude stabilization manipulation, instead of actually preventing derogation under mild threat, simply prevented the children from reporting derogation; perhaps the children actually derogated the toy in the mild-stabilization condition but simply did not report a change for fear of appearing "different" than their peers. In any case, these data failed to clarify the predictive problem posed by the simultaneous availability of multiple attributions in this setting.

Throughout, this study has been discussed in terms of children's compliance with implicit and explicit adult demands; but it should also be clear that the present data support Freedman's (1965) contention that a strategy of

moral training involving minimally sufficient pressure will, in the long run, prove more effective than a strategy involving more powerful, but effectively unnecessary, pressure. Such a strategy, as the present results indicate, can successfully produce not only behavioral avoidance of the forbidden activity in subsequent situations but also increased resistance to temptation in later related, but quite independent, situations as well.

Whether children's resistance to temptation in such situations is best characterized as indicative of "compliance" or "honesty," however, is perhaps a moot point, given the particular subject population employed. Certainly Kohlberg's (1964, 1969) analysis of and normative data on the development of moral judgments suggests that a child's "morality" this early in life consists precisely of an orientation toward obedience to authority figures and the avoidance of possible punishment. In any case, the notion that a child's resistance to temptation may be importantly governed by his rather specific perceptions and expectations of himself, based in part on his previous patterns of behavior, seems to be a proposition worthy of further study.

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